



Toolkit and Resource Guide

Community-Based and Faith-Based Agencies

San Bernardino County
Transitional Assistance Department (TAD)



April 3, 2012

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Dear Community Partners:

On behalf of the San Bernardino County Transitional Assistance Department, I am writing to thank you for lending your support to our CalFresh outreach efforts by attending and participating in this training.

The CalFresh Program is the first line of defense against hunger. We have a common goal to improve the ability of low-income people to access nutritious food by participating in CalFresh. Our department is committed to promoting the nutrition benefits of CalFresh, but we cannot do it alone. The information and materials provided through this training will help you share the benefits of CalFresh with those who are eligible but not participating.

As a department we have been involved in a number of ongoing community outreach events and we are partnering with various federal, state, and local agencies in getting the word out about CalFresh. We have successfully enrolled thousands of individuals into the program, yet we realize there are a significant number of individuals that qualify, but are not receiving benefits. Together we can make a difference in the lives of these individuals.

We are glad you are joining us in supporting our department outreach efforts, and we are honored to work with you. With your support, we are confident that we can reach more of San Bernardino County's individuals and families not yet enrolled in CalFresh. Our combined efforts will reinforce our mutual positions as community leaders; provide opportunities for positive media exposure; and open the doors to increased community outreach efforts.

Again, we thank you for joining us in supporting this important effort, and we look forward to an ongoing, positive working relationship with you.

Sincerely,



Nancy Swanson, Director
Transitional Assistance Department

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What is CalFresh?

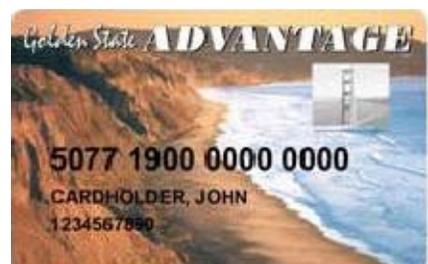
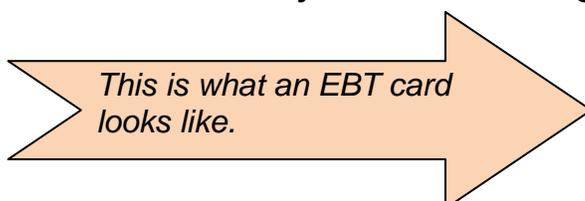
CalFresh, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a federally-funded nutrition assistance program for low-income families and individuals. The program is known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In October 2010, California named its nutrition assistance program CalFresh.



CalFresh benefits:

- Are not paper stamps: benefits are issued on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.
- Can be used at most grocery stores and at some farmers' markets.
- Can be used to purchase most food items and seeds/plants to grow food.
- Cannot be used to purchase household items, cigarettes, alcohol, pet food, or prepared meals.
- Are available to everyone who is eligible.



Why promote CalFresh?

CalFresh benefits our state and local community

- CalFresh helps low-income families and individuals:
 - Stretch food dollars – those receiving CalFresh benefits spend more money on food than other low-income households.
 - Helps fight obesity.
 - Puts food on the table for children – over 50% of SNAP participants are children.
 - Helps keep elderly family members independent.
- CalFresh helps states and local communities:
 - Supports local food retailers – the average monthly CalFresh benefit amount per household is approximately \$200, which is spent in local grocery stores.
 - Generates economic activity – Every \$5 in CalFresh benefits spent at local stores equals a total of \$9.20 in community spending.
 - Leverage federal funds – CalFresh benefits are federal funds. By increasing the number of people receiving CalFresh, communities can bring federal money into their communities.



CalFresh enables low-income individuals and families make better and healthier food choices.

When families use CalFresh benefits to purchase food, they are able to allocate more of their income to other basic needs like shelter.

Residents of San Bernardino County are not getting benefits to which they are entitled.

- According to the California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), San Bernardino County ranks eighth in the state in CalFresh participation.
- It is estimated that San Bernardino County is losing roughly \$186 million in CalFresh benefits because of nonparticipation by eligible households.
- 56% of eligible households/individuals in San Bernardino County are not receiving the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Lack of information or misinformation, fear of the government, and confusion about the application process are all barriers to higher participation rates. Here's where your agency can help educate potential customer about the program, let them know they could be eligible, and encourage them to apply!



Myths about CalFresh

Myth: CalFresh is a welfare program.

Truth: CalFresh is a nutrition assistance program designed to help individuals and families buy nutritious food when money is tight.

Myth: Some people only receive only \$16 a month in CalFresh benefits.

Truth: While some people receive \$16, the average CalFresh benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data).

Myth: CalFresh is only available to families with children.

Truth: You do not need to have children to receive CalFresh; benefits are available to families and individuals.

Myth: I have a job; I can't receive CalFresh.

Truth: Individuals that have jobs may be eligible to CalFresh.

Myth: I am not a citizen of the United States; I can't receive CalFresh.

Truth: Individuals that are Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) of the United States may be eligible to CalFresh. Children born in the United States to undocumented individuals may be eligible to benefits. Applying for and receiving CalFresh benefits does not impact anyone's application to become a citizen or LPR.

Myth: I have a car/home/retirement account; I am not eligible to CalFresh.

Truth: CalFresh regulations change routinely; in 2010 and 2011, the regulations concerning property were removed. There is no property/resource limit for CalFresh.

Myth: I receive Women, Infant and Children (WIC) benefits; I can't get CalFresh.

Truth: You can receive CalFresh, WIC and food from a local food bank all at the same time.

Myth: I have a criminal record; I can't get CalFresh.

Truth: CalFresh does have regulations concerning drug and fleeing felons, but the only way to know if you are eligible is to apply.

Who qualifies for CalFresh?

Only county Eligibility Workers (EWs) can make a final decision about an applicant's eligibility for CalFresh.

HOWEVER, everyone has the right to apply for benefits.

There are two basic eligibility criteria:

1. At least one person in the household must be a United States citizen or a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR).
2. At least one person in the household must NOT be receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Families and individuals that do not meet these basic eligibility criteria (e.g. a family whose members are all undocumented immigrants), can call 2-1-1 for additional food resources.

Eligibility is determined for most applicants based on their financial situation, including all income:

- *Earned – The amount of money an individual makes per month.*
- *Unearned – The amount of benefits received monthly (e.g. Social Security Income, Unemployment Income, and Disability Income).*

In addition, review the following sections in this toolkit that may apply to a particular household:

- *Immigrants*
- *Homeless households*
- *Students*
- *Ex-offenders (Fleeing and Drug Felons)*

Expedited Service

(Emergency CalFresh)

Expedited Service is the rush issuance of emergency benefits due to a household meeting certain eligibility criteria. Households who qualify can receive their CalFresh benefits within **3 business days** after applying. In order to qualify, the household must meet the criteria listed below:

Monthly housing costs (including utilities) are more than the sum of the household's income and liquid resources for the month,

OR

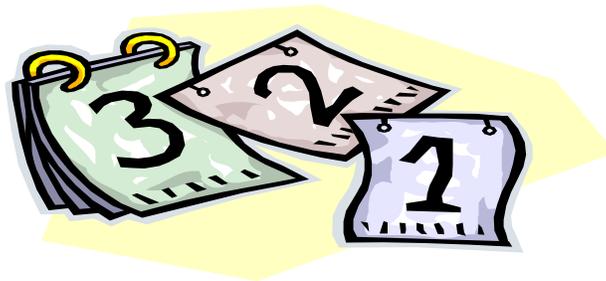
A household has less than \$150 in monthly income and \$100 or less in liquid resources,

OR

The household is a migrant farm worker family with less than \$100 in resources.

Homeless clients are eligible to receive emergency food stamps.

Applicants only need to show proof of identification and work registration (if applicable) to get approval for their first month of CalFresh. All other verifications can be postponed.



Income

To be eligible to CalFresh a household's income** (before taxes) must be below the gross monthly income guidelines. See the chart below.

A household includes all individuals who buy and prepare food together.

Household size	Gross Monthly Income 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	Maximum Monthly CalFresh Benefit
1	\$1,180	\$200
2	1,594	367
3	2,008	526
4	2,422	668
5	2,836	793
6	3,249	952
Each additional member	+\$526	+150

Effective October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012

Exceptions to the rules:

1. If a member of the household receives SSI/SSP, his/her income is not counted against the household and he/she is not counted in the household size.
2. If a member of the household is undocumented, his/her income is "pro-rated" and only part of the income is counted in the budget.
3. If a member of the household is elderly (60 years or older) or disabled, the household does not need to meet the gross income test (only the net income test).

****See the next page for a list of what is and is not counted as income in CalFresh.**

Net income test:

- In addition to the gross income test, households must also qualify under a "net income test". This means that after expenses, monthly income must fall at or below 100% of the FPL. During the application interview the Eligibility Worker (EW) will review the household's monthly housing, utilities, medical, child care and child support expenses to determine if net monthly income is at or below 100% of the FPL.
- The amount of expenses (and allowable deductions) determines the amount benefits the household receives.

The minimum benefit amount a household can receive monthly is \$16.

What is and is not counted as income in CalFresh?

The following is considered income in CalFresh:

- Social Security Administration (SSA) income
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Retirement income
- Wages
- Alimony
- Unemployment Benefits
- CalWORKs
- Self-employment income
- Veteran's Affairs payments

The following is NOT considered income in CalFresh:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Financial Aid for students
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Child earnings when the child is:
 - 17 years old or younger, and
 - Enrolled in primary or secondary school at least half-time, and
 - Under the parental control of a household member.



Resources

Resources are not counted when determining a household's eligibility to CalFresh.

The items listed below **do not** count as a resource in CalFresh and are not used to determine eligibility to the program:

- Vehicles
- Homes
- Lots
- Retirement accounts
- Life Insurance Policies
- Personal Property

Property/Resources are used to determine eligibility to the cash-aid program - CalWORKs



Eligibility Information for Immigrants

Who is eligible?

- Undocumented immigrants are not eligible for CalFresh, but they can apply for and receive benefits for other members of their household who are citizens or Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs), such as children.
- Some groups of immigrants – regardless of their immigration status, may be eligible as well, such as:
 - Refugees
 - Asylees
 - Victims of domestic violence

Sponsored immigrants:

A LPR whose sponsor signed an affidavit of support (Form I-864) on or after 12/19/97 may have part of his/her sponsor's income counted in the CalFresh case, UNLESS his/her income is below the 130% limit even with the sponsor's support.

Effect on CalFresh application on obtaining residency or citizenship:

- Receiving CalFresh has no effect on someone's application for United States citizenship or residency.
- CalFresh recipients are not considered "Public Charge" because CalFresh is a nutrition program, it is not welfare or cash aid.

Confidentiality

TAD Eligibility Workers (EWs) verify residency information with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

Eligibility Information for Students

Who is considered a student for purposes of CalFresh?

- An adults between the ages of 18-50 who is:
 - Not incapacitated, and
 - Enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher learning.

Who is not considered a student?

- An individual that is:
 - Under 18 or over 49
 - Mentally or physically unfit
 - Attending high school
 - Enrolled in non-credit college courses or in community service courses
 - Participating in on-the-job (OJT) programs
 - Enrolled less than half-time
 - Enrolled in a technical or trade school which does not require a high school diploma

Student eligibility:

In order to be eligible, a student must meet one of the following:

- *Work 20 hours a week*
- *Receive federal or state work study*
- *Have parental responsibility for a child under the age of six (6)*
- *Receive CalWORKs*

Student Financial Aid is not counted as income in CalFresh.

Students under age 22 who live with their parents must apply with their parents as part of the household.

Eligibility Information for individuals with felony records

Many individuals with felony records are eligible to receive CalFresh; only individuals with certain drug felonies are not eligible.

Who is eligible?

- Individuals who:
 - Were convicted of a drug felony before 8/22/1996.
 - Were only convicted of drug possession.
 - Have completed, or are on a waiting list for a government-recognized drug treatment program.
 - Have felony convictions unrelated to drugs or other criminal offenses.

Who is not eligible?

- Individuals with certain types of drug offenses, whose crimes and convictions occurred after 8/22/1996 and were for any of the following:
 - Unlawful transporting or importing of drugs
 - Selling, furnishing, administering, giving away drugs
 - Possession of drugs for purposes of sales
 - Manufacturing/cultivating of drugs/marijuana
 - Soliciting or encouraging minors to participate in any of the above activities

Income from ineligible drug offenders is counted as part of the eligible household's income.



Reminder

If an individual is not eligible to CalFresh (Undocumented, SSI recipient, ineligible drug felon) others in the household could be eligible to receive benefits.

The Application Process



Step 1- Completing the application

CalFresh applicants have four (4) options when applying for benefits:

1. **APPLY ON-LINE** – Applications can be completed on-line from any computer that has internet access by going to:

www.c4yourself.com

2. **DROP OFF** – Drop off the completed application in the drop-off box at any time OR with the receptionist during regular office hours:

Monday – Friday 8:30 – 4:30

3. **MAIL IN** – Mail the completed and signed application to the local Transitional Assistance Department (TAD) office:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 265 East 4 th St
San Bernardino, CA
92415 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1637 E. Holt Blvd
Ontario, CA
91761 | <input type="checkbox"/> 56357 Pima Trail
Yucca Valley, CA
92284 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1900 E. Main Street
Barstow, CA
92311 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2050 N. Massachusetts
San Bernardino, CA
92415 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1627 E. Holt Blvd.
Ontario, CA
91761 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1585 E. Highland Ave.
San Bernardino, CA
92415 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9655 9 th Ave.
Hesperia, CA
92345 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7977 Sierra Ave.
Fontana, CA
92336 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10825 Arrow Route
Rancho Cucamonga,
CA
91730 | <input type="checkbox"/> 73629 Sun Valley Dr.
Twentynine Palms, CA
92277 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15980 Main St.
Hesperia, CA
92345 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2040 W. Woodpine
Ave.
Colton, CA
92324 | <input type="checkbox"/> 881 W. Redlands Blvd.
Redlands, CA
92373 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10875 Rancho Rd.
Adelanto, CA
92301 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15010 Palmdale Rd.
Victorville, CA
92392 |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> 1300 Bailey St.
Needles, CA
92363 |

4. **WALK IN** – Hand the completed and signed application to the receptionist, wait to be called and be seen by an Eligibility Worker.

Paper applications are available at all district offices.



State law allows applicants the opportunity to turn in an incomplete application if unable to wait for their appointment. In order for the county to accept the application it must contain the following:

✓ Name ✓ Address ✓ Signature



Step 2 – The interview

The application interview is an official and confidential discussion of the household's circumstances, which directly relate to the determination of CalFresh eligibility and benefit issuance.

- After submission of the initial application, a Transitional Assistance Department (TAD) office representative will call the applicant to set up an interview. Interviews are completed either:
 - Face-to-face at the local TAD office, or
 - Via the telephone.
- During the interview the applicant will be informed of the following:
 - Expedited Service rules
 - Right and Responsibilities
 - Work registration and participation requirements
 - How to complete and submit the Quarterly Report (QR 7)
 - Application processing timeframes
 - How benefits are calculated
 - What verifications they are required to provide and how to submit them, such as:
 - ✓ Identity
 - ✓ Noncitizen status
 - ✓ Income
- If the applicant does not attend the interview appointment, he/she will be sent a Notice of Missed Interview. It is the customer's responsibility to contact the county to reschedule the appointment.
- When the application is approved or denied, the applicant will receive a Notice of Action informing him/her of the action.





Step 3 - Verifications

CalFresh applicants will be asked to provide verification or proof of some of the information they include in their applications.

The following is a list of documents most applicants are required to provide:

Type of verification	Items accepted
Identification	Driver's license or state identification card, birth certificate, baptismal certificate, student/work identification card, voter registration card
Income	Pay stubs, statement from employer, copy of check, self-employment records, Social Security award letter, Unemployment award letter
Residency	Mortgage statement, rent receipt, utility bill with current address
Non-citizen	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) cards (green card), USCIS letters (Notices of Action)
Students	Financial Aid paperwork, enrollment paperwork

The above list is not all-inclusive. Applicants having trouble obtaining official documents may self-certify.

Deductions/Expense Verifications

The following chart contains a list of verifications that are required to allow a deduction/expense.

Deduction/Expense	Verification items
Child Support	Court order, paystub showing garnishment
Dependent care/Child Care	Provider statement
Medical Expenses	Medical bills, pharmacy bills

If the required verification is not provided, the application will be processed, but the deduction/expense will not be allowed.



Fingerprinting is no longer a requirement for CalFresh, BUT is a requirement for the CalWORKs program.



Step 4 – Approval or denial

San Bernardino County is required to notify all applicants of the decision on their case within 30 days of date of their application.

Applicants are notified of the decision via an approval or denial Notice of Action. Applicants that are approved for benefits will receive an approval Notice of Action that also includes the benefit amount.

If an applicant is eligible to CalFresh, he/she will receive his/her Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card and select a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Benefits are “loaded” onto the EBT card on a monthly basis. After the first (and sometimes second) month, benefits will be made available on the same day of every month, corresponding with the last number of his/her case number. Example: Case #5512345 will receive their benefits on the 5th of every month.

What if the application is denied?

CalFresh applications may be denied for various reasons; the reason for the denial is explained on the denial Notice of Action. Applicants who do not understand the reason for the denial should contact the office, Eligibility Worker (EW) or supervisor for an explanation.

Applicants can request a hearing if they believe they were unjustly denied or if they believe they were issued the incorrect amount of benefits. Hearings may be requested by following the instructions on the back of every Notice of Action.



Helping households stay on CalFresh

It's important not only to apply and receive CalFresh benefit; but to continue receiving benefits.

Households should be reminded that:

- Quarterly Reporting (QR) households must complete and submit a Quarterly Report (QR 7) every three months:
 - If the QR 7 is not received by the TAD office, households will be discontinued and households will lose their CalFresh benefits.
 - The QR 7 is mailed to the household and can be returned by mail, via the C4Yourself customer portal or in person.
 - Households must sign and return the QR 7 even if there are no changes in their income or expenses since the last report.

Customers may need assistance in understanding and completing the QR 7.

Others:

- ✓ CalFresh households should notify the Transitional Assistance Department (TAD) any time there is a change in their income or expenses, as this may make the household eligible to increase in benefits.
- ✓ Individuals who are employed and receive paystubs should keep them in a safe location; copies will need to be submitted with the QR 7.
- ✓ Recertification – CalFresh benefits are “certified” for one year at a time; households must complete a recertification yearly. Households will be advised of their certification via the Notice of Action – Notice of Expired Certification (NEC).



The following households are not required to complete QR 7s:

- Homeless
- Seasonal/migrant farm workers
- All the adult members are elderly or disabled and have no earned income

Online Resources

Online CalFresh application:

www.C4Yourself.com

Prescreening tools available on the internet:

California Department of Social Services

<http://www.calfresh.ca.gov/PG849.htm>

2-1-1 Resource Tool

<http://www.211sandiego.org/calfresh-foodassistance>

Local, State and National Resources:

San Bernardino County Human Services

<http://hss.sbcounty.gov/HSS/tad/default.asp>

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) CalFresh

<http://www.calfresh.ca.gov/>

e-Benefits California

<http://www.benefitscal.org/>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/>

Other agencies:

San Bernardino County 2-1-1

<http://www.211sb.com/>

California Food Policy Advocates

<http://cfpa.net/>

California Association of Food Banks

<http://www.cafoodbanks.org/>

Creative Outreach Ideas



Put information about CalFresh in your monthly newsletter or mailings to families.

Host an Application Clinic during the holidays, fairs, or large family events. Let TAD know beforehand and we'll provide the materials.

Recruit volunteers to read this toolkit and talk to families about CalFresh in your waiting rooms.

What other ideas do you have?